

COVID-19 Pandemic Journal

Sunday, March 15, 2020

I meant to start this journal over a week ago, so will do a little catching up before I get to today. On February 26, trump said in a news conference that there were 15 cases and that number would go down to zero in a couple of days. Within 3 days, there were 12 more cases and one person had died. There were also a lot of unfortunate people trapped on a cruise ship off shore in California that had tested positive, but he said he didn't want them to come ashore because they would increase the numbers. (!) At this point the government was not testing people other than in these few cases. Suspicion is that trump did not want to test for the same reason that he did not want to allow that ship to dock.

Kenny and I started semi-quarantining a little over a week ago, when we learned that his heart disease and diabetes and general elderliness put him in the high-risk group. People were still not limiting their activities too much at that time. I went to my art class at Joanna's studio in Takoma Park as usual on Wednesday, March 4. My friend Beth came to visit on Thursday, March 5; and we had washing machine guys and humidifier guys in on Friday, March 6. After they left, we wiped down with Clorox wipes stuff they had touched. The South by Southwest Festival in Austin that Matt presents at every year was canceled a few days before he was due to fly there on Sunday, March 8. We stayed in isolation until Tuesday night, when we went up to Frederick to babysit Ethan. Brandon came by too, and we learned the next day that he had a cold. Kenny did one last in-person shopping trip on March 11. Thanks to Amy's foresight (she saw this coming way earlier than I did), we stocked up for both her and us at the beginning of the month. Good thing we did, because this past weekend shelves were stripped bare of Purell, cleaning stuff, toilet paper, water (for some reason I do not understand), produce, meats, etc.

As of March 12, the CDC was reporting 1,629 cases and 41 deaths in the United States. In a speech from the Oval Office on the evening of March 11, trump made several false statements. U.S. futures tumbled immediately, as did the stock market the next day. It was the largest single-day drop since the 1987 crash. The market went down 2,353 points, with the Dow closing at 21,200.62. Maryland canceled all schools. Broadway closed. And the NCAA tournament was canceled, with multiple other professional sports falling in line and closing. And we canceled our trip to Norway that had been scheduled for the three weeks in June.

Back to today, March 15. I woke up with cold symptoms. Had a dry cough last night, but I think that was still a remnant of the infection I had at the beginning of February. (That one started with a dry cough and a sore throat on February 5, but had no upper respiratory involvement at all. It all felt bronchial. I got very bad laryngitis for a few days. Amy had the same thing, with laryngitis as well, and Ethan was also sick. I was sick for about 10 days.) As for my current cold, I may have caught it from Brandon. The day after we saw him, he came down with cough, stuffy nose, wheezing, and sweats. He said he was feeling better the next day.

Amy came down with a cold yesterday. She thinks she caught hers from Ethan, who got it from daycare. She has runny nose, itchy throat and ears, and a tiny cough. None of us have had a fever yet, as far as I know.

We are now running out of milk and produce, and have ordered through Giant Food Peapod, an online service. We are due to get our order tomorrow night.

Kenny and I walked yesterday in the Paint Branch, and the day before at Brookside. We took some play equipment up to Frederick for Ethan yesterday, but did not stop in because they are self-quarantining also. On the way back, Kenny pumped gas into the Subaru, but he wore gloves and was very careful. Matt and Ashley are in semi-quarantine, although they are going out to get supplies as needed. Ashley went to Target today. I think all of us are fairly well-provisioned for the short term.

Our church, Saint Andrew, had a service today on line (a Vimeo link through Facebook). It was wonderful, and I will probably listen to it again.

I chatted with Mikel yesterday for about an hour on the phone. She and Ken got back from Spain about a week ago. The whole country is closed down now, and it is one of the worst hot spots. Mikel said they got out in the nick of time, but I am very worried about them, especially since they flew to Florida right after for a family reunion. I didn't tell her that though.

It is 6 pm, and now my throat is hurting (not sore as such but painful in a different way), and I have swollen glands. Took my temp and it is 97.9. That is probably my normal. Just heard from the USPHS on TV that a high fever for seniors is considered to be 99.6 (or maybe 99.7?).

Monday, March 16

As of today, the CDC is reporting 3,415 cases and 67 deaths in the United States. Experts are still saying that the death rate (case fatality rate) is 1-2%, with cases doubling every 2-6 days. But there is still very little testing so we really don't know, and experts do assume that the testing (which provides their daily case numbers) is just the tip of the iceberg.

Ashley went out to Target this morning, hopefully for the last time. She brought us a couple of cartons of orange juice, which I was thrilled to get because I love to have OJ when I have a cold. I gave her the two jars of Clorox wipes that I had bought for them a couple of weeks ago, before stores were all out. She tried to get milk too, but Target was out. So I gave her the carton of whole milk that we had on hand, because with the littles, they need it more than we do. We stayed about 5 feet away, which was hard because I wanted to hug her.

I just spoke with Amy on the phone. She is trying to decide how to combine her need to watch Ethan and her work. She is thinking she will try to work 3 hours a day, while he is sleeping. One option is to move in here in 2-3 weeks if she feels reasonably confident that they are disease-free. Then I could watch Ethan while she teleworks. We would all be in isolation together. But she worries that since little kids don't tend to have symptoms even when they have the infection, that Ethan might pose a risk to us.

San Francisco just imposed a shelter-in-place order effective at midnight. If that happens here, Amy's decision will be made for her. I wish they were here with us.

Stock market plunged again, with the worst one-day point drop in history. The Dow went down about 3,000 points, ending the day at 20,188.52.

It is so odd to be looking at my little pocket-size calendar and see all the things I have Xed out over the coming weeks. Allowed group gathering size has been steadily decreasing. It wasn't that long ago that it was 250, then down to 50, and now I believe it has gone down to 10. Most state officials are saying that schools are not likely to open again this year, and trump just said that the pandemic may last into the summer. This was the first press conference where he actually seemed to grasp the seriousness of the

situation, according to Kenny. He watched it, but I have a very hard time watching news. It makes me too anxious.

Gratitude. I want to start ending each daily entry by listing small things I am grateful for today:

- Seeing Ashley today.
- Having so many friends to check in on: my soul sisters Mikel, Palmer, Marilyn; Laura and John, who round out the Magnificent Seven; my former GAO colleagues Beth (my Barbie chum) and Anne (my art class chum); my neighbor Sally L; and our neighbors Sally and Bill, if they get back from Florida as scheduled on Wed.
- I am grateful that I got to have a nice, long conversation with Amy today. I admire her ability to analyze this situation and weigh all factors in her decision-making process.
- My beautiful view of the forest from our back windows.
- All my positive Facebook friends and family.
- My brother texted me today, and seems to want to stay in closer touch than he ever has.
- Kenny, who is so wise, but then I am thankful for him always.

Tuesday, March 17

Just heard the numbers for today. Over 5,000 infected, and over 100 dead.

A St. Patrick's Day unlike any we have ever had before—bars across the country are closed. Helen and Bruce's Nocterra Brewing Co. has just celebrated its wildly successful first year in business. They are now offering home delivery. Hopefully, that will keep them afloat over this crisis.

Got our first delivery from Giant Peapod last night. Put the room-temperature items on the kitchen table for a couple of days in case there are any viruses on them. Put the refrigerated items (yogurts and OJ) in the fridge. Will wipe off all with Clorox disinfection wipes before we start using. Immediately signed up for our next delivery, but the earliest delivery date I could get was Sunday, March 29.

I couldn't sleep last night—was too anxious about the news and had a persistent post-nasal drip that was causing a cough. I finally took a Claritin to get rid of the drip, and that helped. But I got 3 hours max. I need to do better to help my immune system. I am forcing fluids and taking three kinds of gummy vitamins: a women's multi, B12 250 micrograms apiece, D3 25 micrograms (2000 IU) apiece. Usually I take only one gummy of each to stretch them out, but full "dose" is two a day.

Amy says she is feeling better today. Hope everyone else can stay healthy. To that end, moved Kenny out of our bedroom today and into Matt's old room. Should have done that a few days ago. This morning he wiped down all the surfaces I may have touched.

My temp was 97.9 yesterday, 98.3 this morning, 99.0 just now at 2 pm, and 99.1 an hour or so later. And 98.8 at bedtime. I don't mind saying I am a bit jittery about this. I did my Calm app 30 min body scan, and it put me right again. I need to remember the BASICS from Claire Weekes:

- Shut down "what-ifs"
- Be present IN the moment
- Accept!
- Go to your breath. Float . . . Let time pass

Gratitude:

- Our daffodils in the backyard are out, and they are beautiful.
- Sermon podcasts from our church. I listened to two this morning.
- My Calm app, my Roberta Shapiro Worries meditation (on my playlist), and my Kelly Howe Healing Meditation (also on my playlist)
- Our beautiful house—if we have to be quarantined somewhere, this is a very fine place to be

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Latest U.S. figures this evening: 7,942 cases, and 132 deaths.

This is the day the pandemic is due to explode in the U.S. Our curve does not look at all like it is flattening out as it should. That is very bad news for our health care workers and the hospitals. The federal government should be stepping in now to build hospitals. The president (who is a con man and a fool) should be calling on the Army Corps of Engineers to do this work. That is what they are there for. But that is probably too much to expect from someone who spells it Army Core in his tweets. And he should not have disbanded the programs that were in place in the National Security Council and elsewhere to handle pandemic preparation and response. (I did a lot of work on these issues at GAO, which can be accessed by Googling my name, GAO, and works like bioterrorism, SARS, pandemic, preparedness, anthrax, etc.). His voters thought government was “too big,” so his administration set about destroying programs and forcing good, patriotic workers out. I lay the blame for the magnitude of this disaster at his feet, and also at the feet of the yokels who voted for him because they wanted to “shake things up.” Well, they got their wish.

My temp this morning is 98.6, which is supposedly a tad high for seniors. But I am back to being a little more on the cold side than on the covid-19 side for my illness. Thinking that I had covid-19 was terrifying to me. I am not particularly fearful of death because I have my faith. I would not like dying alone and on a ventilator, but I feel like I have the strength of mind to handle it (and hopefully they would give me some palliative drugs).

But I feel like my family still needs me, especially Kenny and Amy. Amy and I have been planning to bring her here after she gives birth in October (due October 19), so that I can take care of Ethan and Amy while she takes care of herself and the baby. I don't think anyone could possibly take care of themselves, a 3-yr-old, and a newborn directly after giving birth.

Markets immediately dropped about 1,200 points when they opened this morning. I am glad all my money is in bonds or real estate funds. And Kenny's is in conservative funds that have some exposure to the stock market. I lost out on the big growth between 2008 (when I got out of the stock market) and early 2020, but at least my money SHOULD be relatively safe now. Of course if there is inflation, we are all in trouble.

Since his election, trump has been taking credit for the stock market rise, even though the trend began thanks to the work Obama and his administration did following the 2008 crash, which was a product of business-friendly policies instituted under the 8 years of the Bush administration (look it up). Here in a nutshell is what I have watched happen to country during my adult life: Clinton cleaned up the mess made by Bush 41, Bush 43 made another mess, Obama cleaned that up, and then trump has made the biggest mess of all. It is as if he killed the pilot of a 747 in flight, took over the controls with no

experience or ability to learn, glided for a while and lulled the gullible passengers on the flight (about 30-45% of the passengers) into thinking they were safe, and then, when he couldn't keep the pilot charade going any longer, ran out of fuel and crashed.

Ordered more vegetable seeds today. We will grow in containers, which I also ordered, on our back porch. Today I ordered a small freezer from Macy's on line. [Macy's later cancelled the order.] All the larger ones were gone from every store. I am glad Ashley and Matt were able to get one. I half-expect to get an email from Macy's saying the freezer I ordered is no longer available.

Just took my temp. At 7 pm it was 99.4. Now I am a bit frightened again. I am continuing to cough, but I am coughing up phlegm, and covid-19 is supposed to have a dry cough. I also have a vague, sort of slightly burning feeling in the top of my lungs. I do not have any shortness of breath.

Gratitude:

- Amy told me something sweet today. Ethan is calling the baby "Brother/sister," and Amy and Ethan have funny pretend-conversations with the baby.
- Both of my kids are taking such good care of their families.

Thursday, March 19

This evening's figures: cases 10,442; deaths 150

I got very little sleep last night—about 3 hours. I finally took my temp because I felt so bad I was certain I had a fever. But it was 97.9. I was so happy! Just now, at about 2 pm, I took my temp again, and it was 99.1. I really want to get over this thing, which I now am nearly convinced again is just a garden-variety bad cold. Using a heating pad and staying hydrated seems to help. Also am taking a multi, B12, and D3 vitamins.

In the middle of the night I went a little crazy ordering stuff. I simply tried to order bar soap on amazon.com, because we are nearly out. But when I saw the crazy prices, I panicked a little, and bought several things we use that we are nearly out of, including the soap, light bulbs, and batteries. I also bought a little extra in case the kids need anything. Also ordered supplies for our printer today.

I spoke with Amy this morning, and Matt and Ashley this afternoon. Amy said she had relented and allowed Brandon to be with Ethan, even though Brandon has not been quarantining himself but has instead been all over installing germy ATMs. I worry that this has put Amy and Ethan at risk, especially since pregnant women are now a high-risk group. (I also worry about Brandon, but can do nothing about that.) I had a cool water table and accessories delivered for Ethan. Amy says when he is playing with something he especially likes, he always asks "did somebody get this for me?" What a sweet boy.

I spoke with Matt and Ashley this afternoon. Both are feeling the effects of the stress on their affect. But they are holding it together well, Matt is working from home, and Ashley feels very blessed that they have a nice home and yard and play equipment for the kiddos. Avery had a few meltdowns today, Matt said. I wish I could just come and hug her and play and make her laugh. My sweet girl.

It is about 70 outside. I think I will go out and do a little weeding. Good to get some fresh air and sun and engage my senses.

My temp is down to 98.6 at 9 pm, so things may be lookin' up a little bit!

I also talked to my brother today. I was very concerned to learn that he is having to work and continue to be exposed to the virus. He works in a “level 3” food production facility and is responsible for keeping various machines and lines running. There is a new rule that no more than 50% of the workforce at a given place can continue working on site, but level 3 workplaces are an exception. He said that not everyone is careful. He told me that he has a bit of a cold and feels pressure in his chest and short of breath. I am very concerned, and I pray that God will send his angels to protect him. I want to take him to Norway next year. We got so close.

Gratitude:

- I am glad that our neighbors, Bill and Sally, are back from Florida. I have missed them, and it feels more secure having them here than when their house is vacant.
- I am glad I am losing weight! I had hoped to be about 147 by the time I went to Norway in June. I haven't been below 150 for decades, except for the past few days, when I have dipped to 148.5. I hadn't weighed myself since I was stuck at the 154.5 plateau for weeks when I was on Noom. Now I just need to lose this cold, or whatever I have, and start using my Airdyne in the basement and my free weights. The irony is not lost on me that now that I can fit into smaller clothes, and will hopefully look better, no one will see me. Oh well, glad I bought some aspirational size 10 things, which I assume will fit quite nicely now.

Friday, March 20, 2020

Today's numbers, this evening: 17,228/223

Today was rainy and warm. I walked Minnie up and down the street, and we both enjoyed it. Both dogs are getting a little chubby, and the walks will be good for them. As for me, I don't have much of an appetite, and I have lost weight. I was down another half-pound this morning, to 148. My cold is much better, but am still coughing up phlegm. I didn't take my temp, but doubt if I had a fever today.

Amy is restarting her quarantine count, and we both hope all of us will be symptom-free in 3 weeks or so, so that she and Ethan can move in here.

Today's accomplishments:

- Ordered several things we are running out of, including the hepa filters for my air cleaner, paper and toner cartridges for the printer, and laundry and hand soap. Lots of things I want to get are just not available at all, such as spray disinfectant. I heard today that Giant is having lots of trouble staying stocked. I have tried not to overbuy, but now I am starting to worry that I should have.
- Replaced missing lightbulbs in the basement. I have more on order, so hope they come! One of my amazon orders (containing 4 cans of nuts and 4 cans of soup) has been indefinitely postponed.
- Sticking to my plan to meditate every afternoon. Did a 30-minute body scan from the Calm app.
- Walked Minnie.

Gratitude:

- The ornamental cherry one of the kids got for free at school, which I planted and then forgot about for a few years, is in beautiful bloom outside our back porch.

Sunday, March 22

I didn't make an entry yesterday, so here is what we did in a nutshell. I spent most of the day trying to get the basement organized. This is a task that will take several days, but I want to get it to the point that if someone needs to be seriously quarantined from the rest of the family, they can be comfortable there, with exclusive use of the powder room. Still have a long way to go. In the afternoon, we went for a walk on the Paint Branch trail. The bloodroot is just starting to come into bloom. Also saw one spring beauty in a very sunny spot. More people were on the trail, but it wasn't crowded, and everyone gave each other the required 6-10 feet of space. Texted my brother yesterday to see how he was doing; he said "feel a little funky but I'm thinking it's just stress. No fever. No headache. No cough." His company (Sandridge?) is making them work to produce their food products, but he is happy to be getting the pay. So many others are getting no paycheck. Unemployment claims have skyrocketed. I am worried about him; and Bruce, who is delivering his beer all over Columbus; and my cousin Terri, who is a nurse in Cleveland. Every day when she comes home from her shift, she closes her front door, strips down, and gets right in the shower. The authorities are still allowing restaurant take-out deliveries. They claim it is safe, but none of our family is doing it. I know they want to keep the workers employed. I pray for protection for all who are out and about and working in the midst of this long-haul crisis.

As for today, we listened to the St. Andrew service again this morning. And then I put my cut-off spring onions in a jar with water to sprout so that we can have fresh chives. Amy texted me that she and Ethan are still fine, as are we, although my cough lingers. Amy is sprouting onions too, and has put her sourdough starter together. I ordered stuff today for a backyard vegetable garden. Should be kinda fun. Hope the squirrels and groundhogs and rabbits and deer stay away.

I've stopped putting in the numbers. It is too dispiriting. Kenny is keeping track in the log he is doing in Excel. I will still put them in from time to time.

Since almost the beginning of this pandemic, I have had the strong feeling that the Earth itself is trying to throw off an infection. But the infection is not covid-19, but us. We humans have damaged the planet so badly that I have long been fearful for the type of environment our grandchildren will grow up in. Scientists were writing reports warning about global change climate since at least the 1980s and 1990s. I know because I edited a lot of them (for the National Research Council and World Resources Institute). As the years went on, the calls to action from the scientists became more and more urgent, but governments kept bowing to big business and refusing to institute the kinds of controls it would take to begin to mitigate the growing damage. And as soon as trump was elected, he pulled us out of the Paris Climate Accord, and the world lost our country's leadership on the issue. I am hopeful that this catastrophe, which was also predicted by scientists and ignored, will bring the world to its senses. We don't need business growth to live. We can live lightly on the earth. Hundreds of millions of us across the globe are being forced to do that now.

Gratitude:

- I am truly grateful for the delivery people, the doctors and nurses, the medical researchers, the people who keep the hospitals clean, and the leadership of people such as Dr. Anthony Fauci of NIH and N.Y. State governor Cuomo. We know we can trust what they say, as opposed to the bloviating idiocy that comes out of the president's mouth.

- I am grateful for social media. We are under siege, but unlike sieges of the past, we can stay connected with each other.

Monday, March 23, 2020

Spent a large part of the day ordering garden supplies from Home Depot and Burpee, to be delivered to Amy. Still not clear whether it is going to be realistic to have her move in here. Want to make sure they are supplied with some fresh veggies.

Oh, and almost forgot the big news. Kenny and I paid off our house mortgage today! We were so close, and with the current economic crisis, did not want to risk not being able to pay because our money was frozen. So we took some money out of our retirement funds, transferred it to the bank that holds our mortgage, and now we just need to wait for the deed. Yay!!! Owning this house outright makes me feel more secure. Our C'teague house note is about \$1K a month; we can handle continuing that until we sell, if we ever do.

Tuesday, March 24

I decided last night to write an email to Dr. Armstrong. I told him I was worried about my continuing bronchitis since my last illness. My bronchial tubes felt inflamed, and I was concerned that bronchitis would make covid-19 worse if I caught it.

Recap of my symptoms, mostly using notes I made on my minicalendar and in my journal at the time, but some from my recollection:

Feb 5 Cold, sore throat, cough, bad laryngitis, stiff neck

Feb 10 Seem to be over cold, except for lingering cough

Mar 7 Nearly over lingering cough. Begin self-quarantine because of K's diabetes and heart disease

Mar 10 Made exception to our self-quarantine because daughter needed us to babysit for our 3-yr-old grandson this evening. Brandon, her ex-boyfriend was there and we visited. He installs ATM machines all over Maryland and environs.

Mar 11 Found out Brandon (age 34) has a "bad cold." He texted me that his symptoms are "cough, stuffy nose, wheezing, sweats.

Mar 14 Daughter and grandson both sick. Could have picked it up at day care or from Brandon. Daughter decides to quarantine. K and I walk a couple of miles on trails at Brookside Gardens.

Mar 15 Woke up with cold symptoms, 4 days after exposure. Sore throat, dry cough (that eventually became wet), sneezing a little, runny nose (not bad). Even so, K and I walk a couple of miles on trails through Paint Branch Park. That evening, throat hurting (not sore as such but painful in a different way), swollen glands. Temp 97.9.

Mar 16 Told K that I can't smell or taste food. My favorite oatmeal tastes like cardboard.

Mar 17 Couldn't sleep last night because of cough (not "dry" but not coughing up a lot, although it is yellow-green). Can't taste or smell food. Temps thruout day: 98.3, 99.0, 99.1, 98.8 (bedtime)

Mar 18 Temp 98.6 upon waking, but 99.4 at bedtime. Coughing with some phlegm, and "slightly burning feeling in top of lungs, and fatigue. No shortness of breath.

Mar 19 Very little sleep last night. Temp 97.9 in middle of night. Fatigue all day. Temp 2 pm 99.1; 9 pm, 98.6

Mar 20 Feeling somewhat better. Lingering cough, hoarseness. Sixth day of illness. Didn't bother to take temp.

Mar 21-24 Lingering cough, but cough up less each day, and it is only a little white phlegm. Lingering feeling of inflammation in bronchial tubes. Can taste food again. Went for 2-mile walk in Paint Branch Mar 22 and felt no shortness of breath.

One final thing: I have lost 6.5 pounds since the beginning of March. From 157 on Jan 4, to 154 on Feb 25 (which was because I was dieting on purpose), to 147.5 this morning (Mar 24). I stopped trying to diet at the beginning of March. And beginning with our self-quarantine, we have been eating smaller meals to conserve food because we have not gone into stores at all.

Dr. Armstrong's office called me and immediately set up a video appt for 2 pm. He was all excited because it was his first video appt. I gave him the symptom list above in advance of the appt. Here is the email I sent the kids after our appt.:

Hi, guys, I have two pieces of news:

- I may have already had covid. I had a video appt with my primary dr just now. I told him the symptoms I've had since March 11. I had a lot of detail for him because I've been keeping a journal the whole time, but basically, from March 15 through 20, I had at various times, a sore and/or painful throat, swollen glands, a sore neck, dry cough, wet cough, hoarseness, bronchial inflammation, a low-grade fever (up to 99.4) for three days, with accompanying fatigue. I also had one other symptom, which I mentioned to Dad at least a couple of times as I was eating during those days: I couldn't taste or smell my food. I just found out this morning that is another possible covid symptom. The dr said it can happen with colds too, but it has never happened to me before. I never had any shortness of breath. He says people who have tested positive for covid have had various symptoms, and that mine are "certainly consistent with covid, and you might have had covid." He said he can give a test only to someone who has had a known exposure to someone who tested positive. (What an undercount of cases this is going to lead to!) He wants me to use my albuterol respirator to get rid of my lingering cough and bronchial inflammation, and he says that 7-14 days after my symptoms resolve I should be able to be with my grandchildren without worrying that I will transmit to them. Dad moved out of our bedroom when I got this and is not using our bathroom either. I am staying out of the kitchen. We have been being as careful as we can be in the same house. I asked about reinfection, and he said some cases have been seen in other countries, but he suspects these are cases where the patient was immunocompromised to begin with. So the good news is, if I had covid, it wasn't too bad!
- We paid off the mortgage! We were so close that we decided we would take it out of our retirement accounts and increase our monthly cash flow. Yay!

This new normal is all so strange and difficult, but remember to stay grounded in the here and now. There are bright spots here and there; watch for them and enjoy them. love, mom

Wednesday, March 25

Numbers at 3 pm: over 60,000 confirmed cases/838 deaths

Fifteen days after I first came down with symptoms of “whatever-it-is.” Yesterday afternoon, we learned from a CNN news article on line that conjunctivitis, or more accurately, “itchy eyes that are not necessarily reddened but have red around them and on the rims,” seemed to be a symptom, and sometimes the only symptom of advanced covid in the nursing home in Washington where there were so many early deaths. Since Kenny has been complaining of itchy eyes off and on for at least a week, I became very concerned. In fact, I immediately had a panic attack, the first full-on one in many years. Fortunately, I now know that if you accept the feelings and float through it, while engaging your senses to remain grounded, it will pass without harming you. Last night, I send a message to Dr. Armstrong about my concern, adding that I was quite anxious about it, and he responded this morning: “Good morning Roseanne. I certainly understand your angst when reading such things and then thinking about your loved ones having similar signs or symptoms. I have 2 recommendations. First, stick with reputable healthcare related websites such as CDC.gov, state and local health department websites, and other reliable health organization websites to get your medical information. Please do not get it from news outlets, all of whom have other motives for the reporting. Second, remember that Covid 19 is a viral illness that enters your body through the respiratory tract, so signs such as conjunctivitis will be accompanied by respiratory symptoms and possibly fever. These things having been said, please contact me at any time with concerns.” I trust Dr. Armstrong and found those points comforting.

Amy told me this morning that she is going to try to get a covid test from her primary care provider. It would really help if we knew what we were dealing with. Even if we test positive, we are supposed to care for ourselves at home, so that would be no different from what we are doing now. But if we tested negative, we would not have to be wondering if we are going to die in a few days. (Sorry to be so frank, but I want this journal to be an honest reflection of my feelings and events.) Even though that possibility is out there, I am trying really hard, and for a large part succeeding, to remain in the present. This is another thing I am glad I have practiced over the course of my life. So glad to have that tool in my pocket. Wish everybody did.

Amy was successful in getting a swab, because she is pregnant. She went to the hospital, where there was a drive-through testing site. She will know in 1-2 weeks.

Friday, March 27, 2020

Today's numbers: At 2 p.m. 91,833/1,366, although I just heard (at 5:30 p.m.) that the cases have topped 94,000. World numbers are 539,565/24,109.

Yesterday I ordered several things on amazon that we didn't need yet but expect to in the short term. (We also took another chunk of money out of my TIAA account.) Our vacuum cleaner may be dying, so I ordered a new Kenmore canister vac from Wayfair. Also ordered a curtain for our back sliding glass door from Wayfair.

We got the soil and boards for Ethan's garden today. Bill B has said he would saw the one in half that we need for the ends. I noticed on the sugar snap pea packet that now is the time to sow the peas. I guess I better get started soon! The hard part is going to be digging out the grass where we plan to put the garden.

Gratitude:

- I am thankful that I have a big stack of books I haven't read yet and that I have not downsized my book collection yet.
- I am grateful I have so many friends and relatives to care about and keep in touch with. May they all stay safe and healthy!

Saturday, March 28

Today I spent a lot of time working to get the boxed deliveries from over the past few days opened and stored away. We let them sit in order to give the virus time to die. Supposedly, it can last a full day on cardboard and longer on plastic and metal. We left them as long as 4 days, and then I wiped them with disinfectant and put them away in the house where they could sit even a bit longer without us having to touch them. Need to finish this job tomorrow, by 4 p.m., when we are expecting a big delivery from Giant Peapod. Then I will promptly order again. The plan is to put the groceries on a big table in the garage, leaving most to sit, but separating out the ones that need to be refrigerated or frozen and the ones that we plan to take up to Amy on Monday.

Also gave money to the International Rescue Committee today for their work with the Syrian refugees. Having to deal with this virus is bad enough without having to be living in a refugee camp as it rages through the population. We also plan to give money locally, to EMEAN, which pays people's rent and utility bills when they can't, and we are earmarking funds for the St. Andrew food pantry.

Our petty president today told medical equipment producers to ignore orders from Michigan because the governor had angered him. He also announced that he will not adhere to the regulations in the new bailout bill that govern creation of a special inspector general's office. That function is badly needed to prevent, or at least shine light on, the corruption of the big corporations that are getting the lion's share of the money. The upsetting thing to me is that his supporters are actually fine with all these things. They see him as a big tough guy when he does stuff like this. I am trying to write as little about him as possible, but some things need to be noted for history's sake, because he and his supporters do their best to try to erase his aberrant behavior.

Monday, March 30, 2020

A gorgeous day, weatherwise. Today we took Amy's share of the groceries up to her. I added in a few Easter things for Ethan—some plastic eggs for a hunt, a little bunny and a chick toy for his Easter basket, and some little sand dollars (he recently became interested in under-sea stuff because of a big under-sea floor puzzle he has). Of course, we couldn't hug them, but they sat on their front stoop and chatted with us. Ethan actually seemed to understand. He said it was sad we couldn't come closer "because of the bad germs." Amy looked good—no baby bump yet.

It is a good thing that we got up there this morning because this afternoon Governor Hogan announced a "stay-at-home" order for Maryland residents. We are not allowed to go out, except for necessities such as getting food or going to work. Most places are closed, so not a lot of people are going to work these days. We decided that we needed to get over to Matt and Ashley's too. We had a gallon of milk, some cash, and some books (on how to deal with depression and anxiety) to give them. Avery and Noah were so cute. Avery was running up and down the sidewalk, showing us how fast she is (she is fast!). Noah was running too, although he did not always come back, much like Ethan at his age. I miss playing with Avery, and I am sorry I am missing getting to know the little man better. He does know who Bappa

and Grammy are though. We got a chance to chat a bit with Matt. He has been very sad about the current situation, and has had some rough times with depression. He also told us his office cut everyone's salary by 20% rather than laying anyone off. I am hopeful that his office can maintain that level.

The pandemic seems to be shifting into a higher gear. Cases and deaths are increasing at a faster rate. Today the president implied that hospital workers are selling their masks on the black market. He is clueless about the need for the federal government for personal protective equipment and ventilators. He probably made up the lie about the masks to cover for his own inability to get these items where they need to go. He also implied that New York's Governor Cuomo is hoarding ventilators. What Cuomo is doing is stockpiling for the onslaught he knows is just around the corner. Stockpiling is a necessary component of emergency preparedness, a topic the president obviously knows nearly nothing about (as is evidenced in every single one of the ridiculous press briefings he holds every day at 5 p.m. because he can no longer hold the ridiculous political rallies he has been holding ever since he was inaugurated).

Our neighbor Bill B cut one of my 8-ft boards in two today, so that I can build my little 4x8 garden for Ethan. I am thankful that he and Sally decided to hunker down here instead of at their other house in Florida. So now we have neighbors on both sides again, because a family of five—Jose and Carla Cruz and their children—bought Amber and Jon's house on the other side.

Tuesday, March 31, 2020

Today's U.S. numbers, as of about noon: 165,075/3,038

Word is that we should expect increasing numbers over the next couple of weeks, with a peek at about April 15. It breaks my heart that both Amy and Ethan are going to have to have their birthdays during the height of this (Ethan turns 3 on April 28).

Still have a bit of a cough. Also, since my illness I have been having GERD, or at least I think that is what it is. There is a little burning feeling in my chest, and it is worse in the evening. I have been having to take TUMS, which don't do much good. I have hardly ever had this before, and always attributed it to my excess weight, because the first time I had it was when I was heavily pregnant. But I have lost a lot of weight in the past few months. This morning I was at 148.5. Maybe the problem is stress. But after an extremely anxious few days—when I realized that I might have covid and was worried that Kenny was developing it too (because of his itchy eyes) and had convinced myself that one or both of us were going to die and had a panic attack—I have been managing the stress fairly well, I think.

[Update on earlier covid symptoms (see page 8): I need to add a couple of symptoms I remembered later. (1) At about 4 a.m. on the morning I woke up with the symptoms, I had a strange bout of diarrhea. I never have IBS at this time, and it felt very odd. (2) I also remember having a slight headache the first couple of days.]

Today is the first full day of the Maryland Stay-at-Home order. We can leave our house for essential tasks only. I spent a good part of the day getting the container garden stuff out in the back and pulling weeds in the front. While I was pulling weeds for about 45 minutes, not a soul walked by. This is highly unusual and felt very eerie. No signs of life out there at all.

Thursday, April 2

Today's numbers for the U.S.: as of about 6:30 p.m., 240,120 / 5,794

Today's numbers for the world: as of about 6:30 p.m., 1,007,977 / 52,771

The United States has the most infections by far of any country in the world now. In Ecuador, people are dying in their homes and being left there because morgues and cemeteries are overwhelmed.

The news is dire. Numbers are going up, and the Strategic National Stockpile is nearly depleted. Ventilators are almost gone. When they are, the numbers who die will increase rapidly. Our doctors and nurses are stretched to the limit. They are working long shifts and watching people die. They cry themselves to sleep at night. They have shortages of personal protective equipment, so some of them are dying too. trump says he doesn't think hospitals really need all the stuff they are asking for. He is a dope. He is also refusing to make the shut-down nationwide, and so people are still gathering and spreading this thing in Texas and a few other states. He figures if he leaves everything to the governors, he will not be held responsible for what happens. He is forcing states to bid against each other and FEMA for ventilator from China. Disasters like this one are where the federal government needs to step in. But he is incompetent, as are most of the people he installed after shoving out people who actually had experience and knew what they were doing. Produce is rotting in the fields in Florida, and people in cities need food. Many of the food bank distribution sites here have had to shut down because they tend to be staffed by seniors, and seniors are most at-risk for covid-19. The few that are open are already being overwhelmed. I should clarify that the people at the food banks today were there both because supplies can be hard to find and because they have run out of money after paying their monthly bills. The unemployment rate is high and rising, and unemployment benefits have not kicked in yet for those who even are entitled to them. And the Stimulus Package checks are not coming for at least 2 weeks. People are probably going to get pretty desperate in the meantime, and the government should be setting up food distribution sites now. It does not have to be this bad. This is all on him.

Congress is going to be writing an after-action report, but I want to be a witness here to these things for history's sake. Trump will probably write his own after-action report (once someone tells him what one is), and it will be glowing. Anyone in the future who reads it should fact-check it against contemporaneous records. It will fall apart quickly when they do.

The White House decided today to tell people to wear masks or face coverings when they are out. Need to figure out how to make one. Sure wish I could sew. I do have a few Home Depot masks left over from painting and sanding projects. May have to use one of those.

I am still having a tad of congestion in my bronchial tubes. I barely coughed at all today though. Just tried to rest so I can beat this thing once and for all. In addition to resting, I've been drinking water like crazy and taking one zinc tablet a day and 1000 mcg of B12 in the hope it will help my immune system. I also meditated, which was very helpful as always. Amy said today that she expects results of her swab test in about a week. It is hard to stay still though. I really want to get that garden put in.

I also got in touch with the Helen. She said Bruce hired a delivery guy, so he is concentrating on brewing now and washing his hands all day long. She and the girls spend a lot of time outdoors, as do Ashley and her little kiddos. Wish Amy had a bigger yard, but at least Ethan does have some nice riding toys. I miss my family so much.

Friday, April 3

Last night Jared Kushner (trump's son-in-law) appeared at the daily press conference. Apparently he has been part of the covid team at the White House. When asked why the states haven't been getting the ventilators that remain in the Strategic National Stockpile, he said, "those are ours, not the states'." It came out today that private hospitals have been calling trump on the phone, and he has been doling the ventilators out to them randomly. There is NO coordinated federal effort on any of the response to this pandemic. Trump just keeps bragging about how he made an early decision to close the border to China, his sycophants keep telling the American people what great leadership he is showing, and the Fox TV audience eats it up. Fools.

Just got notice from Amy that her covid test came back negative. So she may not have had it, and Kenny and I may not have had it. But there are apparently a lot of false negatives with this test, although I don't know at what point in the illness they are most likely to occur. She had her test after her symptoms had almost completely resolved. Onset of her symptoms was March 14, I think. I think Brandon got sick on March 11, the day after we saw him when we were babysitting Ethan one evening. She didn't get her swab test until March 25, which would be 11 days after onset of symptoms and maybe 4-5 days after she was exposed. Amy now thinks it was not covid; she thinks that she got something Ethan picked up at day care. But what Brandon had is still in question.

Saturday, April 4, 2020

Took groceries up to Amy again today. Traffic was sparse, but still heavier than I would have expected for the stay-at-home order. It was so good to see them; Ethan was chattering away about bees and ants and the sand dollars I had brought up for him last time. He broke them open to find the birds. He is a little scientist, just like his mom. Amy gave me two plants for our garden, a thyme and a mint.



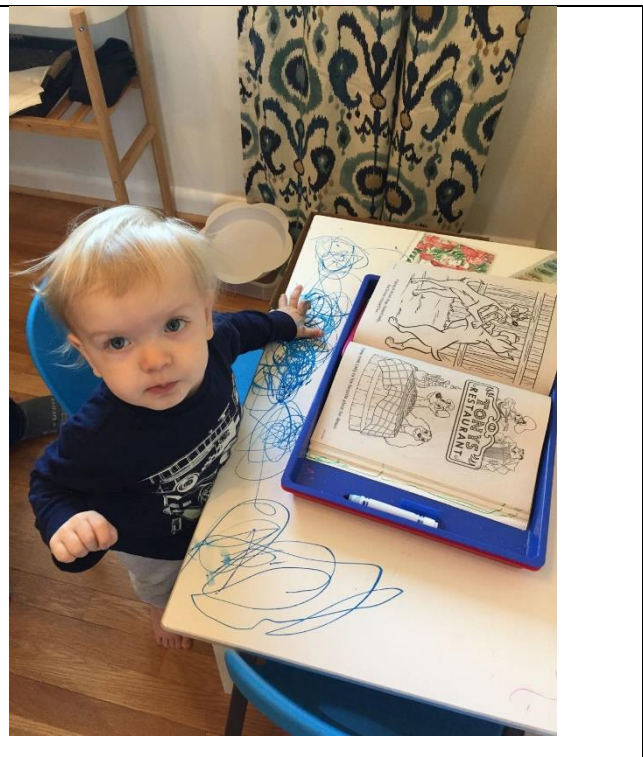
Ethan and Amy on their front steps today.

Kenny and I put the boards for the raised-bed vegetable garden together this afternoon. And then he got to work digging out the grass inside the 4x8 interior. Gardening and weeding are such good therapy—can't wait to get back out there tomorrow. We are also putting containers on our deck and a couple of half-barrels on the patio. We haven't tried growing veggies for years, but I want to be able to have a little bit of fresh produce for the family this summer.

I wrote an email to my friend Marla today. She and Charlie now live in NYC, and that area is currently the hot spot in the nation. Governor Cuomo does not expect the peak in that state for 4-5 more days. Marla and Charlie moved up there a few years ago to help out their daughter Devorah and her family. She is a doctor, and I am sure Marla must be so worried.

As I write this, I am watching a Vintage Barbie auction on Facebook. Tamara has a closed group on Facebook (Vintage Barbie Collector Friends) that I've belonged to for nearly 2 years. I've bought and sold things through her auction, and it has been a lot of fun. It feels so trivial now, with people struggling for breath and dying in hospitals all over the country. But it is a temporary escape, and so I am watching. But I notice my friend Beth (former colleague), who is also in the group, is not on line for the auction, and now I am worried about her and hoping she is okay. Yay—she just jumped on. Interestingly, there are more people watching this auction than usual—43 instead of the usual 20-30.

Haven't heard from Matt or Ashley today, but here are photos of Avery and Noah from the past week. Avery is with her favorite "Pink Bear," and Noah is not buying any of this "stay in the lines" stuff.



April 5, 2020, Palm Sunday

Today was a beautiful day, weather-wise. Warm and sunny. Kenny and I listened to St. Andrew's Palm Sunday service. How I miss singing the liturgy and hymns. We also worked more on the garden. We finally got the sides of the raised-bed garden leveled. I cut down a bunch of those cherry tree suckers that are popping up in the back quarter of our lot, but then I got nervous about poison ivy and snakes and stopped. I also found I was very easily fatigued. It is obvious that I still don't have my full strength back from "whatever the disease I had was." I still have a bit of a cough too, but the burning in my bronchial tubes/upper chest is long gone. Today is the first day I have not felt the need to use the heating pad.

Also, since I stopped drinking chamomile tea, my heartburn is gone. I remembered vaguely that I'd noticed that link before, so I did a test, and sure enough it went away. I would never be writing this much about my health in a journal, by the way. I only do so because we are in a pandemic, and I want to note symptoms for future reference. So, in other health news, my weight hit a new low today—146. That is down from 162 back in September, when I started my gluten-free diet experiment in an effort to figure out why I keep having bouts of IBS. Turns out I do not have celiac; the doctor says I am "gluten-sensitive." Most of that loss has been in the past couple of months though. I haven't been trying to lose, but I have been eating less and eating almost no sweets, simply because food is harder to come by. We have to get our groceries delivered, and the stores are usually out of one-quarter to one-third of the things we order. I am a little worried about this "unexplained weight loss," but maybe it is partially due to the stress. The stress is intense, and Surgeon General told us today to brace for two of the worst weeks of our lives. In addition, our metro area (the DMV) is supposedly moving toward its peak.

In the midst of all of this, my cousin Denny (Mary's brother) had chest pains and had to go to the emergency room. He tested negative for covid, but he has a blockage and needs bypass surgery. It is scheduled for tomorrow. Mary has promised to keep me posted. Meanwhile I am praying.

Haven't heard from any of the kids today. That makes me nervous, but I don't want to bug them too much.

Monday, April 6, 2020

More gardening today. We put more soil into the raised bed, I took out more of the cherry tree suckers, and I weeded tons of grass seedlings from the edges of the mulch beds in both the front and back. While out front, I spoke briefly with the Sally and Bill B. Got within about 5-6 feet at a couple of points. Then I spoke to Michael from up the street. He told me the world is coming to an end, and he was serious. I said, "it sure seems that way." I didn't want to get into a discussion about it because I know he is a fundamentalist. I could have said, "but no one knows the day or the hour" and added that in bad times throughout history people have thought it was the "end times." But I kept quiet. Last night, Kenny and I spoke to Sally L as she was going by. Both Sally and Michael stayed on the sidewalk, and we stayed close to the house. Sally has a progressive lung disease, so I am very worried about her. She seemed in good spirits though.

Just heard that the prime minister of England (Great Britain? The United Kingdom?), Boris Johnson, has been moved to intensive care. He is almost as big a clown as trump. He was one of the driving forces behind the fake populist movement that narrowly won the Brexit vote (exit from the European Union), but he seems to have a human heart, and so this is very upsetting.

Tuesday, April 7

Today's CDC numbers: 330,981 / 12,064

My cousin Mary called me today. We had a long chat. She had been looking through her mom's photos and found an oversize photo of the 85th anniversary celebration of Barum Lutheran Church in Elk Mound, Wisconsin, where the Rotnem family worshipped. We discovered that not only my parents (Eugene and Iris), my Rotnem grandparents (Martin and Dorthea), my Aunt Dot and Uncle Gib (Mary's parents), and our Aunt Vi, but also my Mittelstadt grandparents (Albert and Hattie) are in it. The celebration took place in October 1944, just a couple weeks after my parents had married (September 23, 1944).





Thursday, April 9, Maundy Thursday

Took more groceries up to Amy today. It was rainy, but we got a chance to talk to them a bit anyway. Was momentarily spooked when a police car quickly drove to the end of their cul-de-sac and just parked there. We think he was watching that suspicious house at the end of the street. Unsettling.

This evening, Amy called and wanted me to speak with Brandon to explain to him why she couldn't let Ethan go for a walk with him. I spoke with him, and he reluctantly agreed not to push it. They ended up having a chat out the front door, like we do when we go up. I know this is hard on Brandon, not being able to hug Ethan or even get close to him. But I told him that we all just need to stay safe until there are antibody tests or medicine or a vaccine. I added that many people who were also doing essential work

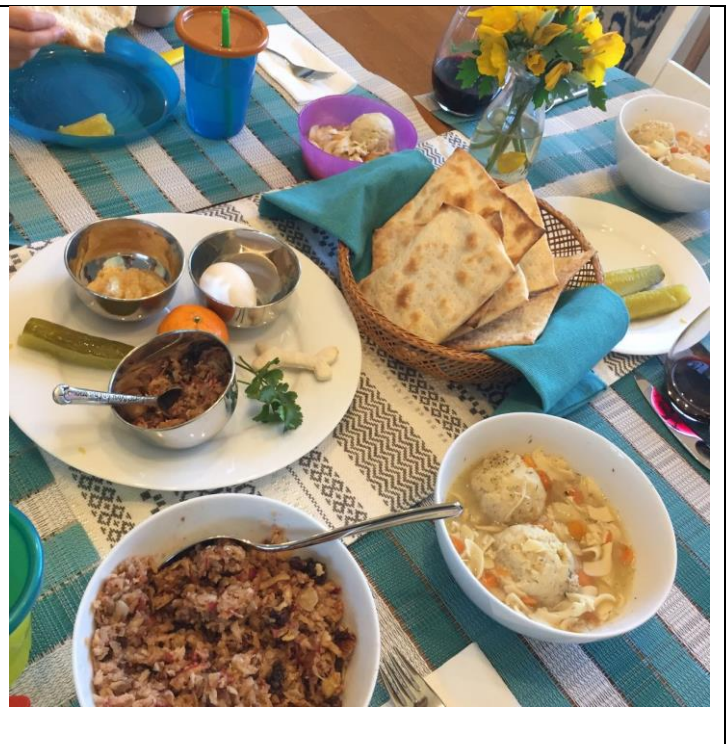
(and filling ATMs is certainly essential work) are also having to stay away from their families for weeks at a time. I explained that Amy was high risk because of her pregnancy. I hope with my whole heart that he can continue to stay far enough away to keep them safe.

I realized today that we really have too much shade in the backyard for a garden. I think we picked the sunniest spot, but it still will be only “part sun,” which is not good enough for many vegetables.

We are starting to hear news stories about how people are getting desperate for food. The relief checks from the government are still at least a couple of weeks away. I have tried two times to connect with a food bank so I can donate. Very few food bank volunteers are still on the job, however, because most of them are in the at-risk senior age group. I will keep trying.

Trump is still not using the full force of the federal government to manage and coordinate the response to this pandemic. Someone on TV today said it is as if we were at war, but he was expecting each state to buy its own military equipment and supplies and defend itself.

Today is the first full day of Passover. I miss our family gathering for the seder. The kids came through for their own families though, and Kenny and I were so touched and happy that they did. Both Ashley and Amy made mini-seder dinners. Matt called us for a videochat to sing the frog song (with my frog puppets) and of course Dayenu. When Passover aligns with Maundy Thursday, as it does this year, I feel the continuity of Kenny’s religion and mine so strongly, and that is especially comforting to me this year. Following are two photos from Ashley and two photos from Amy. Ashley noted substitutions on the seder plate: cilantro instead of parsley, crushed garlic instead of horseradish, and a “bone” crafted with leftover dough. Very ingenious!



Amy made matzoh ball soup, chicken tzimmes, charoset, and sautéed green beans and oranges. She said that Ethan liked the charoset, but that after he finished that he dumped everything else in his soup.



Friday, April 10, Good Friday

Watched the Maundy Thursday service on my iPhone early this morning, and will watch the Good Friday service later today. I am so thankful that St. Andrew is making these available.

Amy had a bit of a fright last night. Ethan fell against the coffee table and had a small gash in the back of his head. She rushed him to the emergency room (a brave thing to do in this time of covid), and they put three staples in the gash. Oddly, Noah had something similar happen a couple of months ago, before covid.

I spoke with my cousin Donetta today. She has pulmonary fibrosis and is on oxygen. She cannot go anywhere, and she says it is horrible. Even walking to the kitchen or bathroom takes her breath away. She sounded good though and confirmed Dan's and my identification of our Mittelstadt grandparents in the Barum Lutheran Church photo above. I love having a copy of this photo and hope someday Mary sends me the original. My Grandpa Rotnem died before I was born, and I don't have very many photos of him. So now I have one more, with all the rest of my grandparents and my parents and other various Rotnems in it to boot! What a treasure!

Saturday, April 11

Amy's birthday—my baby is 35 today. May God protect, defend, and bless her today and every day. We chatted in the morning, and Matt and company Facetimed with her and Ethan later in the day.

Today we finally got our security cameras working properly so that they take clips when triggered by motion when our system is armed. While Kenny was on line with ADT Security figuring out how to do this, he needed to have me moving around—providing the triggering motion—on the front porch. So I had to dance around out there for about 20 minutes while our new neighbors played basketball in their driveway. I hope they weren't too worried about having bought a house next door to a crazy lady.

Got the tomato planter properly filled with potting soil today. Now if my tomato plants would just come!

Sunday, April 12, Easter Sunday

Today's numbers: over 500,000/over 20,000. Just unbelievable.

Listened to the St. Andrew service this morning. I miss being with the congregation, taking communion, and singing. I also miss singing "This Is the Feast" in the liturgy, which I always look forward to singing on Easter because we don't sing it at all during Lent.

We heard on the news this morning that the number of cases in the U.S. is now over 500,000 and the death count is over 20,000, having doubled in the past 5 days. This is the first time in the history of the country that all 50 states have been declared a major disaster area at one time.

This evening Brandon came to Amy's house to visit Ethan, and he would not stay as far away as Amy felt was safe to keep from exchanging covid germs. She called us in frustration. Kenny spoke to Brandon on the phone. He still would not honor Amy's wishes, so she brought Ethan inside, and Brandon drove away.

Monday, April 13, 2020

Bought Amy a new iPad for her birthday. It will be delivered tomorrow. She plans to use it especially for recipes. Now I need to get her a stand to put it on.

Very severe weather is moving through today. There have been deadly tornados in the South, with trailer parks being especially hard hit. Early word in one town is that 18 people have died. Winds are supposed to start increasing here soon. Have already had some gusts that sent trash cans rolling out front.

Amy is ordering things for a fairy garden for Ethan. He will love it. And this morning they made chocolate chip cookies, using the famous Double-Tree Hotel recipe. (Kenny used to love to stay at the Double-Tree when on his business trips to Texas, and he raved about the cookies.) Seeing as how she is still trying to find 15 hours a week to work, I am happy she can find time to do such fun things with him.

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

On this day, 39 years ago, Kenny's father died of a heart attack in Florida.

Today I planted the first vegetables in our garden: two rows of sugar snap peas. Also put some in one of the big barrel pots I have on the patio. Hope the animals leave them alone.

trump is becoming more and more outrageous. Today he threatened to shut down the Congress so that he can easily get all his appointments through as interim appointments during a recessed Congress. He also blamed the WHO for not warning about covid soon enough and said he would withdraw U.S. funds (appropriated by Congress) from them. What I don't understand is why the Republican senators allow this travesty (his presidency and all the concomitant waste and theft) to continue. How much more of this can the 60% of Americans who are good-hearted and honest take?

Thursday, April 16

Today's numbers: U.S. 657,720/33,460 (about 2000 cases per 1M people); Worldwide 2,113,226 / 140,371

And in Maryland, the numbers are 8,225 /235, and in Montgomery County, 2,133 /56. Norway has 6,848 cases (about 1200 cases per 1M people), fewer than in Maryland.

Got another food delivery from Harris Teeter today. I cannot wait until we can go shopping for ourselves again.

Saturday, April 18, 2020

Matt told us yesterday that they have refinanced their mortgage to 3.375% interest rate and are saving about \$210 a month. In addition, he got the good news that his company, Finn Partners, got some federal stimulus money and is now able to restore its employees' salaries back to 100% from the across-the-board 20% reduction Finn had made a couple of weeks or so ago.

And Amy had exciting news. Her company is working on drug trials for a promising antiviral treatment for covid, Remdesivir, and she has been pulled onto the project. The trials are being done with a control group that will receive a placebo, and so it is a more rigorously designed study than those that have been done so far. I assume she will be a data manager, as that is her usual role on studies.

Now a word about living with stress. We have barely left the house now for about 6 weeks. I was sick for about half that time. While I was sick, there were many moments when I had to fight the realization that (and it sounds overly dramatic to say this, but it is a reality) I might be dead in a week or two. I know that Kenny needs me and that Amy will need me later this year when she gives birth. There is also the fear that Kenny might die. Or that we both might. Even after I started to get better, I was worried at times that I might be one of those people who thought they were recovering and then all of a sudden found they couldn't breathe. And of course, any of this could still happen at any point going forward. The virus is out there and still spreading. Our zip code is the number 2 (after Baltimore) hot zone in the state. Maryland's cases still have not peaked. I don't know whether I had it or not; I don't know whether I have any antibodies; and I don't know whether antibodies confer any degree of immunity or for how long. Add those basic core fears to my fears for my kids and grandkids, my brother and his family, and my extended family and friends. Add those fears to my fears for our democracy, based on having a lunatic at the helm who still has a very substantial following of angry half-wits (sorry, half-wits, but the label fits, in part because all the arguments you make can be so easily refuted). Altogether it is almost more than one can bear, if one thinks about it. So I basically try not to. I think about it only when I pray for protection for my loved ones. Then I move on to an activity that engages my senses in my immediate surroundings. I clean, do laundry, mend clothes, pull weeds, plant seeds, write letters or journal entries, breathe and meditate, etc. Most of the time these days, I am calm enough that I can watch television news or scroll through friends' updates on Facebook. So my stress level is now under control despite the grim reality around us. We have a lovely house and yard and no financial worries. But my heart goes out to those who do not have it as good as we do, and, from the length of the food distribution lines that have formed over the past week it is clear that far too many people fall into that category. We are donating money to food banks and distribution efforts, decent political candidates, our church, and of course little Genesis in Nicaragua, who is my Compassion International child.

I am having to fight the editor within me to leave that stream-of-consciousness paragraph above alone. I would have told the writer that it covers too many thoughts and needs to be broken up into smaller paragraphs, each with an appropriate topic sentence. My response would be no; this is a journal; and I am writing for me, not some future readership (although perhaps someone may read this in the future). I want to keep it as immediate and honest as I can.

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

Today's numbers: U.S. 785,245/42,449; Worldwide 2,430,430/170,018

Angry protests have broken out in several states. The protesters want to get back to normal and open things up again. They say the media is overhyping covid, and that the numbers of infections and deaths are way lower than was predicted. What they do not understand is that the numbers are way lower because of the stringent stay-at-home orders governors have imposed. Nevertheless, some Republican governors are bowing to the pressure and allowing some businesses, such as nail salons and tattoo parlors, to open, providing social distancing is practiced in these establishments. Not clear to me how you can give a manicure or tattoo to someone who is 6 feet away. trump is of course fomenting these protests by tweeting his support, even though the governors are following his administration's guidelines.

One of the guidelines is to wear a face covering in public. I have not received the cloth masks and bandanas I had ordered yet. So yesterday I made four out of old t-shirt sleeves. Kenny and I each wore one this morning and had a lovely walk around the neighborhood and across Fairland down into the Paint Branch. The dwarf ginseng is in bloom, and the mayapple blossoms are about to pop. This was our first walk since I was sick, and I am happy to report that it is clear that I have my full strength back.

Friday, April 24, 2020

Today's numbers: The U.S. death toll surpassed 50,000 today

We have been letting our mail, newspapers, and packages sit in the garage for 4-10 days just to make sure there are no lingering viruses on them. Guidelines say all that is necessary is a couple of days, but we see no reason not to be ultra-safe. So it wasn't until a couple of days ago that we finally opened Roz's Passover card. I am inserting it below because I thought it was very well stated. But first I am inserting something that I read and shared last night on Facebook. I was feeling a bit down because sometimes the sadness of the whole situation is just overwhelming and because I have been hearing that pregnant women can have an especially difficult time if they are infected. Of course, I worry about Amy, who is due in October. And Danny and Lindsey's baby boy Jackson is due in June, and Russ and Beth's daughter is also due in June. I have no idea who wrote this, but it surprised and touched me:

"When you go out and see the empty streets, the empty stadiums, the empty train platforms, don't say to yourself, "It looks like the end of the world." What you're seeing is love in action. What you're seeing, in that negative space, is how much we do care for each other, for our grandparents, for our immune-compromised brothers and sisters, for people we will never meet.

"People will lose jobs over this. Some will lose their businesses, and some will lose their lives. All the more reason to take a moment, when you're out on your walk, or on your way to the store, or just watching the news, to look into the emptiness and marvel at all of the love.

"Let it fill and sustain you.

"It isn't the end of the world. It is the most remarkable act of global solidarity we may ever witness."

And here is Roz's Passover greeting:

"Happy" may be a Pollyanna hope for how we might feel this holiday season. The irony of the convergence of celebrating this storied long ago event in the history of our people and the pandemic we are experiencing at the moment is not lost on any of us, I'm sure.

For me Passover has always been a warm gathering of family, filled with yummy food (yes, I love matzoh and matzoh ball soup!) and the joy of welcoming spring. Of course, we always tell the story of the plagues and the escape of the Jews from the evil Pharaoh. We remember too the man-made plague of hatred that the Nazis brought on our people and how so many never did escape. But all of that was in the past and never managed to dampen my spirits.

This year, nothing is normal in any of our lives, and as we shield ourselves from the modern plague that threatens us all, I'll be eating my matzoh alone, but thinking of all of you with much love and hoping that we all stay safe and healthy until it hopefully "passes over" all of us, and we can once again celebrate happy times together.

Meanwhile, sending love and hugs,

Roz

Monday, April 27

Yesterday was a rather dramatic day. Amy was upset and phoned me. Ethan picked up on the emotion, and I spent a long time talking to him on the phone too. He seemed to have a lot on his mind. This is so hard for everyone.

This morning we walked at MLK. It was a cloudy and windy. We crossed paths with only about 10-15 other walkers. When we saw them, we crossed the street if they didn't, and we pulled up our bandanas over our noses. I haven't been sleeping particularly well, and I know I need to walk more often. Hope this helps me tonight. I have also been taking very small amounts of magnesium (one gummy, which is the dose for children under 12) because Miriam has told me that works for her (although she takes a larger dose).

Kenny spoke to his friend Russ on the phone today. Paul and Miriam came by for a short socially distanced visit and to drop off some herb plants.

I think it is time for me to get focus a bit on gratitude again. One thing I am thankful for is the one-hour masterclass lecture I listened to on my Calm app when I couldn't sleep Saturday night. It is by Elizabeth Gilbert and is titled "Creative Living Beyond Fear." It is insightful and inspiring. She provides five

exercises, and I plan to do them, maybe here in my journal. From discussions that Matt and I have had about his writing, I think he would greatly benefit from listening to it too.

April 28, 2020, Ethan's Third Birthday!

Ethan turns 3 today! We love him so much; he is a great kid. His mommy made him waffles for breakfast, and then he opened the presents from Mommy and Daddy, including lots of things for a fairy garden outside. Then he and Amy went out and planted plants in the garden plot she had prepared and added the little figurines. Amy and Ethan then Facetimed with Grammy and Bappa (and some frog puppets) while he opened our presents—a bug catcher set and a tee-ball set. He seemed very happy with both. He especially liked the net and the places to put the bugs he catches “so they cannot escape.” Amy plans to make him brownies as his birthday cake while he is napping.



We are going up to their house tomorrow so that I can watch Ethan in some sort of a socially distanced way (perhaps by strolling him through the neighborhood) while Amy goes to her weekly OB checkup. I plan to wear my old N95 mask (one of two I found with my old painting and sanding supplies). I hope she saves a brownie for us—microwaving should kill any covid germs that may be there.



A few months ago, ancestry.com changed my DNA profile, reducing the Norwegian part to 43% and adding 44% Swedish. I have been wondering where the Swedish came from. I may have gotten closer to an answer today. A fellow from Sweden emailed me and said he found a rather significant match (on Family Tree DNA) to me on chromosome 20. So now the question is, is that on my 100% Norwegian dad's side? It seems to come from ancestors born in Nossemark parish in Sweden between 1751 and 1763. I checked the geography, and that area seems to be quite close to the part of Norway where the Orbecks (Dad's mother, Grandma Dorothea Rotnem's family) are from—on the eastern shore of the Vormå River where it comes out of Lake Mjosa. I will write him back and see what else I can find out. A little mystery to follow up on is a welcome diversion these days.

Today I potted my herbs: Amy gave me mint and thyme, and Paul gave me cilantro, rosemary, marjoram. And yesterday Sally B said she would give me some of her yeast. In other garden news, the first of the kale popped up today. I am happy to have these plants, as food shortages loom.

Thursday, April 30

This morning's U.S. numbers: 1,047,189 / 61,081

Yesterday, Dr. Fauci (White House Task Force) announced that the study on the antiviral medication remdesivir he has been overseeing as head of NIAID at NIH is showing positive results. This is huge news because this is the first "gold standard" study, double-blind with control group receiving placebo, that has been done on remdesivir. This is the study that Amy has been working on (and I am SO proud of her for being able to contribute to this effort). Amy is a data manager, and on this study she was tasked with helping to "clear data queries." The study is showing that for patients receiving the drug therapy the hospital stay was 11 days as opposed to 15 days for the control group. The study also showed a small decrease in mortality in the group receiving the drug therapy (8% mortality vs 11% in the control group). In addition, Dr. Fauci said this is the first study that has conclusively shown that a drug can disrupt the virus. The results are only preliminary at this point, so it was unusual that they were announced. But Dr. Fauci said it would not be ethical to wait to announce because people are dying who could be helped. FDA is going to issue an emergency authorization for remdesivir to be used in hospital treatments for covid.

Personal health note: For the past several days, I have had three lingering symptoms, and I realize that even though I seem to have 100% of my energy back, I may still be fighting "whatever I had" on some level (and that does scare me a little). (1) I still have a dry cough that erupts a few times each day. (2) A couple of times a day I notice an extended period of what feels like a fever ache in my upper back, but when I take my temperature it is 98.5 or 98.6. (3) My chest still feels a little tight. There is no burning, but a tightness or slight heaviness. I ordered a pulse oximeter, and it has arrived, but I am a little anxious about using it because I am fearful it may show that I am one of those people with hidden hypoxia (those are the people who suddenly cannot breathe and have to be rushed to the emergency room). Of course, it is pollen season, and I do have allergies, so that might explain the cough. And stress might explain the chest tightness. Nevertheless, I am trying to do the breathing exercises that have been recommended by some respiratory therapists (series of five deep breaths followed by one with a cough; repeat; then lie on stomach with pillow in front to prop yourself up a bit and breathe deeply for 10 minutes). I have also continued to lose weight (145.5 today). Perhaps that is from fighting a lingering illness, or perhaps it is simply a result of eating less food and little sugar. Time will tell on all of this, so I am trying to be alert and curious but not too concerned.